

East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc. Strategic Plan

An Honors Thesis (HON 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor

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Muncie, Indiana**

April 2015

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2015

Undergrad
Thesis
LD
2489
.24
2015
.538

Abstract

Special needs children struggle to develop both physically and mentally, as normal tasks are significantly more challenging, if not impossible to complete independently. Therapeutic riding is an outlet that offers students the chance to move faster, complete challenges and engage in physically and mentally stimulating activities. East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (ECITRI) provides an outlet for special needs children. However they struggle to maintain operations due to a lack of public awareness. I developed a thesis to help ECITRI rebuild their brand and increase awareness. This thesis contains a strategic plan filled with ideas and opportunities to engage various publics including families with special needs children, volunteers and schools. In addition, the media contact list and elementary school contact list can help ECITRI build relationships and network with media outlets and the education community in Muncie. This project concludes with a press release for the organization regarding their annual 5k fundraiser, a Heels for Hooves 5k. These three pieces will help ECITRI build stronger relationships with the community and increase their public awareness.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Debbie Davis for advising me throughout this project. Her guidance throughout this challenging project was only a small portion of the help and support I received throughout my four-year college career.

I would also like to thank East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc. for offering up any and all information necessary for the completion of this project.

The thesis I have created for Honors 499 combines my passion for horses with the skills I have learned over the past four years as a public relations student. My studies have shown me the importance of creating a strong brand and I utilized this knowledge to work with East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (ECITRI).

This project was a personal challenge because it ties together many of the skills I have learned at Ball State. In addition, horses have always been a large part of my life. Growing up I spent afternoons and weekends at the barn. I wanted to use my love of horses and public relations skills to help an organization. ECITRI seemed like a great match. In creating a new strategic plan to support the program, I can help secure a future for the horses participating in the program as well as ensure riders will be able to enjoy their therapeutic experience for years to come.

ECITRI is a local non-profit organization, dedicated to helping special needs children. This organization works hard to change the lives of children with disabilities. They seek to improve the lives of young people with both mental and physical disabilities. In order to differentiate ECITRI, I spent time with the horses and riders involved in the program. I built relationships with the students participating and saw firsthand how much they enjoyed their weekly sessions.

Ultimately I was able to produce several different pieces of work. I started by developing a strategic plan, outlining the steps ECITRI should take over the next three to four years. These tactics will help the organization build awareness with their target publics and grow their audience. This plan focuses on building relationships with community members and breaking into the special needs community.

After recapping with the organization and determining their needs I also developed three media lists. As ECITRI is seeking awareness, the first list I developed contained media outlets in the Muncie and Indianapolis area. Building relationships with these contacts will help the public learn about ECITRI. In addition to weekly lessons, ECITRI hosts community events such as horse parades and 5k fundraisers. Proper utilization of these outlets will result in a larger reach and greater participation from community members. One of these contacts (the Muncie *Star Press*) has already published a short blurb about the last community event ECITRI hosted.

The second list was focused on special needs outlets and resources in Indiana. As this organization is focused on serving the special needs community, building awareness with this market is crucial. Although they may not use this list frequently, it will be a valuable resource when they are seeking new riders or hosting community events.

The third list I created was dedicated to Muncie community schools. As children make up the program, it is important that parents understand ECITRI is there as a community resource. Families should seek out ECITRI as a therapeutic opportunity for the children, and the goal would be for schools to suggest this as an affordable option or outlet for special needs children.

I also developed several pieces to be sent to the media. The first of which is a short, sample press release in preparation for the organization's annual Heels for Hooves 5k. This release should be sent to the media outlets on the first contact list, so they can grow their audience. Although family members of the students typically participate, bringing in those who run as a hobby or are passionate about those with special needs or equines would significantly increase the number of participants.

The second piece I created was a fact sheet, again focused on the Heels for Hooves 5k. It contains basic information regarding the race and will be helpful for any reporter looking for a quick overview of the event.

Another element of my thesis is a frequently asked questions page. As many people are not aware of therapeutic riding they are curious about why it is beneficial and the risks it may pose. This frequently asked question sheet answers some bigger questions about the program and ECITRI, its accreditation and why parents should enroll their children.

The final element of this plan simply states the key messages of ECITRI. This summary allows the organization to see where their strengths lie. In addition, these statements are what the organization should be promoting to its target publics.

In my initial meeting with the board, it was clear that the organization is struggling with a lack of awareness, funding and volunteers. They have a need for more lesson students, and believe donations and volunteers will come as the program grows.

The biggest challenge I faced was communicating with the client about their needs. ECITRI had a specific set of goals in mind, but did not know what steps to take to successfully meet these goals. In addition to helping them meet these goals I spoke with them about appropriate social media guidelines and what to post online to build followers. Their posts were very inconsistent (i.e. every few months) but now they are posting photos, graphics and updates 2-3 times per week and their number of online followers has grown significantly.

Ultimately, the goal was to create materials that will help ECITRI overcome their current challenges. The strategic plan, contact lists and press release will help ECITRI reach out to new publics and grow their audience. Although this organization holds a special

place in the hearts of families with special needs children, ECITRI needs to connect with volunteers and donors to help the program grow. I think these materials will help the organization build a stronger relationship with their target publics. The connections they make and how they present themselves will help brand them as a safe, reputable option for therapy in the community.

From this experience I hope others will recognize the importance of taking initiative and helping the community. This project made me realize there is a way to combine your passions and help a local non-profit. These materials have the potential to change ECITRI's brand and give them recognition within the community, and I am grateful that I had the opportunity to work with them and create some of the best work I have done as a student.



East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Michelle Schubert



ECITRI 2015-2018 Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

The East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding Inc. (ECITRI) therapeutic program faces a lack of awareness and interaction with Muncie residents, business, and organizations. Although there are many current and potential partners, ECITRI must create and implement a communications plan. This plan will establish awareness of ECITRI initiatives and interaction with key publics, while spreading knowledge to the special needs community and their families.

For these reasons, I have created the following plan for ECITRI. The strategies and tactics outlined in this plan should be used as mediums of communication for the content and initiatives of the ECITRI campaign so awareness of the program and its campaign efforts effectively reach all key publics.

With this plan in place, I hope to provide innovative communication tactics as well as an organized, solution-based formula for implementation. We expect all key publics to gain a better understanding of ECITRI, and why it can positively benefit the lives of participants.

Secondary Research

Mission Statement

East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc., known as SPUR (Special People United in Riding) is a non-for-profit 501(C)3 organization to promote the health and social development of children with special needs through equine assisted therapy.

Situational Analysis

Organization's Vision

High-quality, accessible rehabilitation and enjoyment for special needs children in our community. It has potential to change the lives of those participating, and seeks to benefit them through muscular strength, development of self-confidence, improved concentration and learning, increased self-esteem, and more.

Organization's History

ECITRI is dedicated to offering special needs children an opportunity to experience movement and develop motor skills with equine assistance. They work to stimulate participants through interactive activities such as steering between cones and tossing rings. They operate out of Hartmeyer Stables in Muncie, Ind.



SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- o Website with basic information
- o Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International offers solid research on the benefits of therapeutic riding
- o Working on initiatives to generate awareness and action
- o Hosting events such as horse parades and 5k races to raise awareness
- o An affordable therapeutic option for special needs children

Weaknesses

- o Website is not consistently updated
- o Social media is not utilized effectively
- o Communication is not utilized in a timely manner
- o Lack of awareness leads to few volunteers, donations and participants
- o Budget does not allow for expansion of the program
- o Lack of resources makes it challenging for the program to gain recognition in the community
- o The program is not covered by Medicare or Medicaid
- o The program is only offered one day per week, so there may be scheduling conflicts

Opportunities

- o Partnering with key organizations in city/county to raise awareness of program, such as the Special Education Co-Op and the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities.
- o Partner with local schools and special needs programs to position ECITRI as a fun, affordable option for therapy
- o Gain loyal volunteers through events such as volunteer fairs
- o Create general awareness in community so special needs families can learn about what the program offers

Threats

- o Liability associated with equines
- o Low awareness of program and benefits
- o For families unaffected, there is an indifference to program
- o Competition from other therapeutic riding programs in the surrounding areas
- o Competition from other special needs programs such as the Special Education Co-Op, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and the Apple Tree Child Development Center



Target Publics Analysis

A majority of Muncie residents earn an annual income of between \$25,000 to \$80,000, with the mean income for households settling at about \$45,573. The zip code area 47305 has the lowest income level, as do the school districts of Muncie Central and Muncie Southside.

Approximately 20 percent of Muncie households live below the poverty line, and poverty is unequally distributed among family types and races. Muncie's education rate of high school graduates is higher than Indiana's overall rate, but still below 50 percent.

There are many community resources available for families with special needs children in Delaware County. The Apple Tree Child Development Center in the Muncie YWCA works with developmentally disabled children. There is a Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services program, a Special Education Co-Op available. Building relationships with these organizations can help bridge the gap between the special needs community and ECITRI.

According to National Kids Count, the amount of special needs children is increasing each year. In 2001 approximately 14 percent of children under age 18 had a mental or physical disability and this increased by 10 percent in 2012, with a total of 24 percent affected in the state of Indiana. This means that ECITRI has the opportunity to engage with more publics, as their target market seems to be growing at a rapid rate.

Analysis of Similar Initiatives

Some strategies and tactics were developed through researching other successful equine therapy programs and their initiatives.

1. Agape Unbridled Hope, Cicero, Ind. - Agape offers therapeutic riding, leadership development, youth workshops, and trail riding for people of all ages and disabilities.
2. Edelweiss Equine Assisted Therapy, Greenfield, Ind. - EAET offers therapy both on the horse and through driving. In addition to their special needs programs, they offer a program for veterans and a discovery camp to teach children about horse care and riding.
3. Therapeion Therapeutic Riding Center, Brookston, Ind. - Therapeion has a variety of programs. These vary from a disabilities program, to a neglect and abuse program. This facility also offers camps and opportunities for veterans and youth in the area.



Problem Statement

ECITRI faces very low awareness and interaction with Muncie residents, businesses and organizations. This is due to a lack of relationships with key community members and organizations, including Delaware County schools and special needs programs in the area (such as the Special Education Co-Op).

Target Publics

1. External: Muncie residents, specifically those who have connections with special needs and handicapped children, or those that are interested in working with these children in the future.
2. External: Muncie businesses and organizations that have connections with young children who are special needs or handicapped.
3. Internal: Current and potential partners in the ECITRI program.

Key Messages

1. Therapeutic riding can help disabled children experience healing in a unique environment.
2. Therapeutic riding allows children to move and experience sensations body cannot allow without the assistance of equine, improving flexibility, balance and strength.
3. Riding offers opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in recreational activities outdoors.
4. The opportunities provided through therapeutic riding can also help heal emotional and behavioral issues in children.
5. The program is an affordable therapeutic option, at only \$35 for a six-week session.



Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Establish a reputation with target publics as an opportunity for children with special needs.

Objective 1: Increase awareness of the ECITRI program, specifically its purpose.

Strategy 1: Drive traffic to the ECITRI website

Tactic 1: Include URL in all promotional websites.

Tactic 2: Partner with Ball State (Special education and Speech Pathology departments) to promote organization and website on campus.

Tactic 3: Purchase advertising space on websites for Muncie businesses.

Tactic 4: Promote the website through Facebook.

Strategy 2: Disseminate information in public places by forming community partnerships.

Tactic 1: Form partnerships with key target public destinations.

Tactic 2: Create promotional fliers to place at these destinations

Tactic 3: Create a creative display for these locations that includes takeaways

Tactic 4: Have a presence at community events

Tactic 5: Partner with school systems and send home information to parents with special needs children

Strategy 3: Educate Muncie businesses and organizations that have connections with special needs children

Tactic 1: Create packets or pamphlets to provide to these organizations

Tactic 2: Provide takeaways for participants to bring to others with special needs children

Tactic 3: Host an open house to talk about therapeutic riding and its benefits with interested parents and guardians

Strategy 4: Partner with school districts and other services for special needs children.

Tactic 1: Provide takeaways with information on the importance of therapeutic riding for doctors and therapists to distribute to their clients.

Tactic 2: Create binders or educational information to help parents and guardians understand the benefits of therapeutic riding.



Objective 2: Increase acceptance of unique therapies (especially equine) in the Muncie community so that target publics believe in the cause.

Strategy 1: Create a FAQ page.

- Tactic 1: Compile a list of frequently asked questions by the special needs community about therapy options and equine therapy.
- Tactic 2: Display this predominantly on the ECITRI website.
- Tactic 3: Create handouts to distribute with the FAQs on them.
- Tactic 4: Update the FAQ as more information becomes available.

Strategy 2: Create a viral video that displays the unique attributes of equine therapy and how it benefits the special needs community.

- Tactic 1: Place this video on YouTube, the website and social media.
- Tactic 2: Place the link to this video in any brochures or handout created.
- Tactic 3: Provide this video to community partners.

Strategy 3: Provide consistent updates about early childhood development issues and links to resources.

- Tactic 1: Consistently update the ECITRI website.
- Tactic 2: Create a newsletter that shares facts and resources to those who subscribe.
- Tactic 3: Create a social media plan to keep the community informed and link to studies and other resources.
- Tactic 4: Utilize other ways of communicating such as top ten lists and info graphics.

Objective 3: Increase awareness of ECITRI initiatives.

Strategy 1: Creatively brand the ECITRI promotional materials.

- Tactic 1: Design a logo for the campaign for identification purposes.
- Tactic 2: Design a style guide to be implemented in all design materials.
- Tactic 3: Establish a clear mission statement for the campaign to be repeated throughout materials
- Tactic 4: Establish key messages to be repeated throughout materials
- Tactic 5: Re-design the website to match the branding



Strategy 2: Conduct media relations with local and regional outlets.

Tactic 1: Create a fact sheet on ECITRI.

Tactic 2: Develop story angles for initiatives that tailor to each audience.

Tactic 3: Meet with local media (Star Press, WLBC, Daily News, etc.) to discuss SPUR initiatives.

Tactic 4: Provide media with takeaways on the campaign.

Tactic 5: Pitch for pre-event and event coverage of all ECITRI events and community initiatives (Hooves for Horses 5k, etc.)

Tactic 6: Ask media to include links to the ECITRI website on their websites.

Strategy 3: Disseminate information about current initiatives to the community through established partnerships.

Tactics: Use the tactics outlined in goal 1, objective 1, strategy 2.

Strategy 4: Provide consistent, direct updates to residents and partners about campaign initiatives via different mediums.

Tactic 1: Create an e-newsletter that can be subscribed to from the website.

Tactic 2: Create a mail newsletter that can be subscribed to via phone.

Tactic 3: Create a social media plan with the goal of updating target publics.

Tactic 4: Create a more detailed e-newsletter that will be sent to campaign partners.

Goal 2: Form relationships with target publics (volunteers and donors) and hold consistent communication with these groups.

Objective 1: Initiate interaction between ECITRI, its partners and the Muncie community.

Strategy 1: Connect with parents/guardians of special needs children.

Tactic 1: Hold an open house for parents/guardians of special needs children on the benefits of equine therapy and how it can help support their children.

Tactic 2: Provide website information that includes interactive tools, printable handouts and tip sheets to prepare them for their equine experience



Strategy 2: Take part in community events throughout Muncie and Ball State University to promote ECITRI and its initiatives.

Tactic 1: Attend volunteer fairs to connect with interested parties.

Tactic 2: Set up booths at school fairs to raise awareness for ECITRI programs and their therapeutic opportunities.

Tactic 3: Recruit community sponsors who work with special needs children or their families.

Tactic 4: Provide takeaways for more information.

Tactic 5: Give incentives for attending

Strategy 3: Make the ECITRI staff easily accessible to target publics.

Tactic 1: Create a social media campaign that targets families with disabled children through posting articles and tagging special needs organizations in statuses.

Tactic 2: Start a blog on equine therapy and have partners and members of the campaign (families, staff members) contribute

Tactic 3: Create a forum board on the website so families can ask questions and learn about the experiences of other riders.

Tactic 5: Assign different staff members to work with different community partners and be on-call for any advice, guidance, event support, etc.

Objective 2: Increase involvement in the ECITRI campaign by target publics.

Strategy 1: Attend any special education seminars or fundraisers offered in the community.

Tactic 1: Set up a booth/table with information and takeaways for parents.

Tactic 2: Arrange to speak at community events to raise awareness of SPUR and the opportunities it provides to special education children in the area.

Tactic 3: Encourage future involvement in the program through takeaways and previews of upcoming events.

Strategy 2: Offer their own events for the special needs community.

Tactic 1: Have an event where families with special needs children can meet the horses and brush them, while parents learn more about the program.

Tactic 2: Offer a camp program where participants (based upon their handicap) can come two-three days a week and spend more time with the horses.

Strategy 3: Host a community event to raise general awareness.

Tactic 1: Hold a riding supply drive with local barns in the area to raise awareness.

Tactic 2: Hold a fundraiser with a silent auction and a raffle with proceeds



Estimated timeline

Phase I: Create awareness within the community.

Goal 1, objective 1, strategies 1, 2, 3, 4

Goal 1, objective 2, strategy 2

Goal 1, objective 3, strategies 1, 2, 3

Goal 2, objective 2, strategy 3

Phase II: Establish consistent contact with the community.

Goal 1, objective 1, strategy 2, tactics 3-4, strategy 4

Goal 1, objective 2, strategy 3

Goal 1, objective 3, strategies 3 and 4

Goal 2, objective 1, strategies 1 and 3

Goal 2, objective 2, strategies 1 and 2

Phase III: Build a relationship of two-way communication within the community.

Goal 1, objective 1, strategies 2 and 4

Goal 1, objective 3, strategy 3

Goal 2, objective 1, strategies 1, 2 and 3

Goal 2, objective 2, strategies 1, 2 and 3

Proposed Responsibilities & Future Recommendations

Several parts of this plan need to be enacted by key members of ECITRI. These parts include attending volunteer fairs, school events and other key partners and publics. I also suggest that key members of ECITRI be responsible for developing informational sessions and workshops, radio interviews and special event support.

I also propose forming a coalition of volunteers, from teachers and students to interested community members, to enact many parts of this plan. Areas where volunteers would be ideal are specified within the plan and also suggested for event support.

Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods are used to determine the direction, needs and outcomes of a communications campaign. By applying evaluation methods, ECITRI will learn what tactics are most effective in the communications plan. The effectiveness of the plan should be evaluated according to the plan's objectives in three areas: awareness, acceptance and action. Before implementation of this plan, initial numbers should be recorded, and desired percentage increases should be set for each objective.



A midterm evaluation should be recorded to show progress half way through the campaign. If progress is stagnant or low, tweaks to the plan may be necessary.

Awareness

Tools of measurement for awareness include direct website hits and time each visitor spends on each page, as well as a community-wide survey to document the awareness of campaign issues and initiatives before and after the implementation of this plan.

Acceptance

Tools of measurement for acceptance include a community-wide survey to document the acceptance of campaign issues and belief in initiatives before and after the implementation of this plan.

Action

Tools of measurement include frequency of communication with ECITRI partners, number of community participants in ECITRI initiatives and the number of subscribers to website updates and/or newsletters.

Appendix 1

KEY INDIANA MEDIA OUTLETS

MEDIA OUTLET	NAME	LOCATION	CONTACT	TITLE
Magazine	Indy's Child Magazine	Indianapolis	Mary Wynne Cox	Publisher
Magazine	Indianapolis Monthly Magazine	Indianapolis	Amanda Heckert	Editor/Publisher
Newspaper	Current in Fishers	Carmel	Brian Kelly	Editor/Publisher
Newspaper	Indianapolis Recorder	Indianapolis	Rita Wise	Advertising
Newspaper	Indianapolis Star	Indianapolis	Leisa Richardson	Editor
Newspaper	Indiana Herald	Indianapolis		
Newspaper	Daily News	Muncie		
Newspaper	Butler Collegian	Indianapolis		
Newspaper	The Depauw	Greencastle	Dana Ferguson	Editor-in-chief
Newspaper	The Andersonian	Anderson	Tyler Dague	Editor-in-chief
Radio	WIBC 93.1	Indianapolis	David Wood	Director of Talk Programming
Radio	WCRD	Muncie		
TV	WISH-TV	Indianapolis		
TV	RTV6	Indianapolis		
TV	Newslink	Muncie		
TV	WLFI-TV	West Lafayette		

E-MAIL	PHONE	TWITTER HANDLE	NOTES
mary@indyschild.com	(317) 710-6622		
aheckert@indianapolismonthly.com		@AmandaBHeckert	
brian@youarecurrent.com	(317) 489-4444	@CL_Fishers	
ritaw@indyrecorder.com	(317) 924-5143		
leisa.richardson@indystar.com	(317)444-6378 (317) 923-8291		
editor@bsudailynews.com	(765) 285-8255	@bsudailynews	
collegian@butler.edu		@butlercollegian	
editor@thedepauw.com		@theDePauw	
editor@andersonian.com	(765) 641-3670	@Andersonian	
dwood@indy.emmis.com	(317)684-8733		
newswcrd@gmail.com	(765) 285-9273	@wcrd	
newsdesk@wishtv.com	317-931-2222		
<u>TheIndyChannel.com</u>	(317) 269-1440		
newslink@bsu.edu	(765) 285-9300 (765) 463-1800		

Appendix 2 KEY INDIANA SPECIAL NEEDS ORGANIZATIONS

MEDIA	NAME/WEB DOMAIN	LOCATION	CONTACT
Magazine	Indy's Child	Indianapolis	
Web	Insource	South Bend	
Web	ASK	Indianapolis	
	Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services	Indianapolis	
	The ARC of Indiana	Indianapolis	Sally Morris
Blog	http://www.mommy-diary.com/	California	Angela Kim
Blog	http://mixedupmommy.com/	Atlanta	Becky
Blog	http://www.embracingthespectrum.com/		Teresa
Blog	http://developmentaldelays.blogspot.com/	Michigan	Amy H.
Blog	http://www.findingninee.com/		Kristi Reiger Campbell
Blog	http://twobrothersonejourney.blogspot.com/	Illinois	Angela Conrad

E-MAIL	PHONE	TWITTER HANDLE	NOTES
indyschild@indyschild.com	317-722-8500	@IndysChild	
insource@insource.org	574-234-7101		
FAMILYNETW@aboutspeakalkids.org	317-257-8683	@AboutSpecialKid	
	317-233-4848	@IN_gov	
	317-977-2375	@TheArcIN	
angelajkim@gmail.com		@angelajkim1	
pin.the.map@gmail.com		@EmbraceSpectrum	
letsplaytoysinc@gmail.com			
		@findingninee	
angelaconrad09@hotmail.com			

Appendix 3**DELAWARE COUNTY SCHOOLS**

School	Phone Number
Albany Elementary	(765) 789-6102
Eaton Elementary	(765) 396-3301
Royerton Elementary	(765) 282-2044
Delta Middle/High	(765) 288-5597
Indiana Academy	(765) 285-8125
Burris	(765) 285-8600
Heritage Hall Chrisitan	(765) 289-6371
St. Lawrence	(765) 282-9353
St. Mary's	(765) 288-5878
Southside Chrisitan Academy	(765) 284-7466
Central High	(765) 747-5260
Southside High	(765) 747-5320
East Washington	
Grissom Ele	(765) 747-5401
Longfellow Ele	(765) 747-5401
North View Ele	(765) 747-5422
South View Ele	(765) 747-5226
Storer Ele	(765) 747-5360
Sutton Ele	(765) 747-5431
West View Ele	(765) 747-5437
Northside Middle	(765) 747-5290



E A S T C E N T R A L I N D I A N A

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

CONTACT: Jacqueline Burton
jburton@ecitri.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 2015

East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding Inc. to host annual 5k fundraiser

MUNCIE, IND. – On August, 29 runners from Delaware County will line up to support the special needs community. For the second year in a row, East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc. will be hosting their annual 5k fundraising event.

The proceeds raised during the race will benefit East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding Inc., a 501 (C) 3 non-profit. Operating out of Hartmeyer Stables, the funds will support the horses used in the therapeutic riding program.

"Heels for Hooves 5k is an opportunity for participants to support special needs children in their own community," said Jacqueline Burton, East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc. Board Member. "We are so grateful for their support as it helps these kids reach levels that were impossible before."

The Heels for Hooves 5k offers runners the opportunity to support children and animals in the Muncie community. The East Central Therapeutic Riding program offers special needs children in Delaware County the chance to ride horses, building their physical strength and allowing them to move in ways they cannot while on the ground.

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About East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc., known as S.P.U.R. (Special People United in Riding) is a not-for-profit 501 (C)3 organization to promote the health and social development of children with special needs through equine assisted therapy. ECITRI provides over 500 rides per year of equine assisted therapy to disabled children of East Central Indiana. For more information on our program and the services we provide, please visit our website at www.ecitri.org.



E A S T C E N T R A L I N D I A N A

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

Fact Sheet: *Heels for Hooves 5k*

- What:** Second annual Heels for Hooves 5k dedicated to supporting a local therapeutic riding program in Delaware County.
- Who:** Hosted by East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc.
- When:** Saturday, August 29 at 7 a.m. at Cardinal Greenway, 700 E. Wysor St. Muncie, Ind.
- Why:** To raise funds to support the special needs children and horses that participate in the weekly therapeutic riding program.
- Cost:** \$20 and includes a t-shirt, water and snacks at the conclusion of the race.
- Contact:** Aaron Burton, East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc.
aaronburton@ecitri.org

About East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

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E A S T C E N T R A L I N D I A N A

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is East Central Therapeutic Riding, Inc.?

A: East Central Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (better known as ECITRI) is a therapeutic riding program located in Muncie, Ind. We specialize in working with special needs children.

Q: Why is this type of therapy beneficial for my child?

A: Therapeutic riding is a great outlet for your child. Students have the opportunity to move their bodies in a different way, stimulating the body. This sensory, motor and neurological stimulation helps build stronger muscles and improve balance and coordination. It's also a great self-esteem builder, as students can move faster and complete tasks while riding a horse.

Q: Do you only work with children who have certain types of disabilities?

A: No, we work with any child, as long as they are healthy and strong enough to participate. Some of our past and current participants have disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism, hearing impairments, vision impairments, down syndrome and developmental delays. We will make any accommodations necessary to ensure your child is able to participate!

Q: Are you qualified to offer this service to children in the community?

A: Our program at ECITRI is accredited by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH International). This accreditation required an inspection at our location and strict adherence to safety and educational standards. In addition, all of our instructors are PATH International certified.

Q: When do you offer lessons?

A: Our program runs every Wednesday evening, from 4-7 p.m. We offer 30 minute group session. Each student has the support of at least three volunteers to ensure they remain balanced and safe throughout their session.

Q: Is there an age or weight limit for riders?

A: Yes, we accept children ages 2-18 with a weight of 160 lbs. or less.

About East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

East Central Indiana Therapeutic Riding, Inc., known as S.P.U.R. (Special People United in Riding) is a not-for-profit 501 (C)3 organization to promote the health and social development of children with special needs through equine assisted therapy. ECITRI provides over 500 rides per year of equine assisted therapy to disabled children of East Central Indiana. For more information on our program and the services we provide, please visit our website at www.ecitri.org.



E A S T C E N T R A L I N D I A N A

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

Key Messages

1. Therapeutic riding can help disabled children experience healing in a unique environment.
2. Therapeutic riding allows children to move and experience sensations body cannot allow without the assistance of equine, improving flexibility, balance and strength.
3. Riding offers opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in recreational activities outdoors.
4. The opportunities provided through therapeutic riding can also help heal emotional and behavioral issues in children.
5. The program is an affordable therapeutic option, at only \$35 for a six-week session.

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